

Race to GED®

MILESTONES *of* SUCCESS

2003-2010

***Building a Stronger
Work Force for Virginia***

Race to GED®

MILESTONES *of* SUCCESS



COMMONWEALTH *of* VIRGINIA

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May 14, 2010

Dear Virginians:

Since the start of the Race to GED initiative, the number of adults earning the GED credential has increased by nearly 50 percent. That is a remarkable accomplishment for a program that went to scale only five years ago. The GED credential is, for many, the first critical step toward entering the 21st-century work force, where jobs require higher educational levels. By supporting innovations in adult education and work force development, the Race to GED has helped to ensure that more Virginians are prepared to enter that work force and to continue with further education and training.

Today, unlike a generation ago, the GED credential simply cannot be the final educational milestone for most working adults. However, it is the door through which adults who did not finish high school may substantially alter their economic future and start on the path of lifelong learning. The need for Career Readiness Certificates, apprenticeships, postsecondary degrees and certifications, and employment training must be incorporated into the language, culture, and expectations of adult education systems. That is what we are doing here in Virginia.

The evolution of work force demands that we have seen in just the past few years underscore why the Race to GED is so relevant and crucial today. To remain competitive, Virginia employers need more workers who are able to adapt and think critically in an environment of ever-changing market demands. To address this need, adult education and work force development partners must work in concert and focus on agile and tailored programs that prepare adults with the skills that today's workplace demands. The Race to GED is supporting the development and implementation of just such programs throughout the Commonwealth.

The PLUGGEDINVA program, an outgrowth of Race to GED's outreach and instructional models, recognizes the need for adult education programs to respond to the labor market and prepare adults not only to pass the GED Tests, but also to grasp the myriad of soft and hard skills that are required in today's work force. Focused on the needs of the technology sector in Southwest Virginia, the program is now being expanded to additional high-growth industries important to Virginia's economy. This is the future of adult education, and the Race to GED is a significant part of this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia I. Wright".

Patricia I. Wright

The Race to GED, a part of Virginia's work force development system, began as a Governor's initiative in 2003. The goal was to build a better-educated and more employable work force in Virginia by doubling the number of GED® completers annually from 10,000 to 20,000. The initiative's pilot phase included two major components: (1) extensive outreach across the Commonwealth, including a partnership with NASCAR; and (2) GED Fast Track programs in five regions of the state.

The Virginia Department of Education's Office of Adult Education and Literacy (OAEL) was chosen to direct and oversee the initiative. The funding allocated to this initiative by the General Assembly was the first increase in state funding for adult education since 1988.

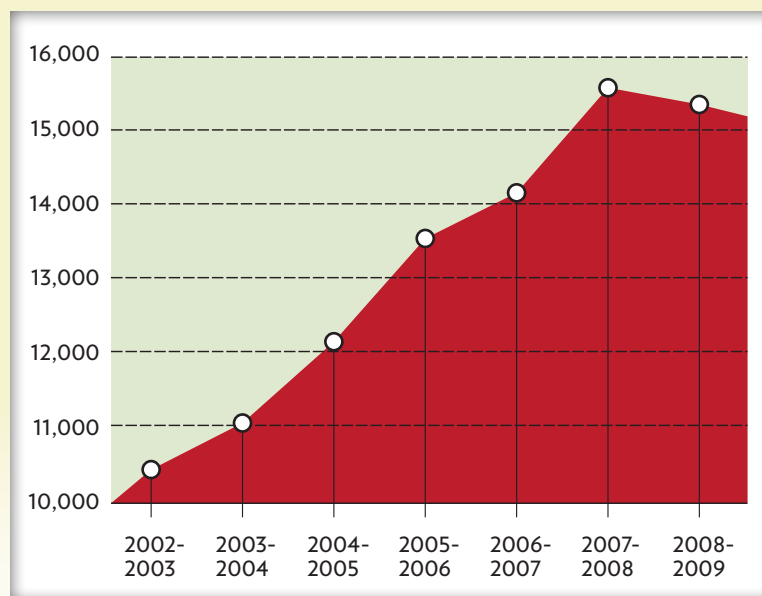
Between 1992 and 2002, an average of 10,311 Virginians passed the GED Tests annually. It was essentially a flat statistic that did not substantially impact the need in Virginia, where 700,000 working-age adults had not completed high school. **The Race to GED's goal is to contribute to the Commonwealth's economic growth and competitiveness by preparing those adults for positions in the 21st century work force of the global economy.**

Five pilot Race to GED programs were established in 2003 to test the initiative's new, accelerated instructional approaches. Ten additional sites were added in 2004. Concurrently, OAEL directed a sustained and targeted marketing effort across the Commonwealth – employing television, radio, and billboards – aimed at educating adults about the financial and personal benefits of earning a GED certificate. The program was fine-tuned throughout these two pilot phases, and in 2005, the Race to GED was expanded statewide. Three priorities were identified for the grant competition that OAEL developed for 2005-2006 funding: outreach; instructional delivery; and GED testing opportunities.

Race to GED's innovative approach to adult education and literacy rethinks how adult education is marketed, delivered, and assessed. Two instructional programs employ targeted instruction to dramatically reduce the time it takes to earn a GED credential. GED Fast Track prepares individuals in 90 days or less to take the GED Tests. GED Prep prepares adults for the tests in 180 days or less.

GED Passers 2002–2009

A 50 PERCENT INCREASE over pre-Race to GED years



The RACE TO GED TIMELINE

10,311

Average annual number of GED graduates in Virginia from 1992–2002

2003

Fall 2003

Governor announces Race to GED as part of Education for a Lifetime initiative

Fall 2003

Secretary of Commerce and Trade earmarks funding to support pilot

Winter 2003

Five pilot sites selected to participate

Race to GED®

Partner Spotlight

LAMAR OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Lamar Outdoor Advertising has been a partner in the Race to GED since the start. General Manager, Steve Southern and Account Executive, Jennifer Sopata, have worked closely with OAEL and the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) to mount regional and statewide outreach campaigns.

At the local level, Lamar offices throughout the Commonwealth have worked with adult education programs to provide high impact advertising that drives adults into classrooms. Lamar has consistently made significant contributions of complimentary signage and extended display times to help our limited resources stretch further. In each campaign, Lamar's generosity and dedication to the Race have resulted in significant increases in calls to the GED Helpline.

In 2005-2006, at the peak of the statewide outreach activities, 41 percent of callers to the helpline indicated that they had called because they had seen one of the billboards. That year saw the largest annual jump in GED passers since the Race began.

"Lamar Advertising is proud to contribute our advertising resources to such a worthwhile project, the Race to GED. We are especially pleased with the number of people who have responded to our billboards, completed the program, and received their GED."

Steve Southern
Lamar Outdoor Advertising

To address the outreach priority, early OAEL efforts confronted the lack of awareness of both local adult education programs and the value of the GED credential by those Virginians who needed them most. These efforts were supplemented with extensive training and technical assistance to local program administrators about how best to market themselves. Today, local programs use their Race funds to develop and implement creative,



nationally recognized outreach campaigns, while OAEL continues to support these efforts with annual outreach activities.

Finally, the inadequate testing capacity in the Commonwealth when the Race began has been mitigated by an aggressive expansion of testing sites, along with strategies to increase the availability of free testing for those who qualify.

It's working. With an annual outlay of less than two million dollars since 2005, the state has seen a remarkable 50 percent increase

in the number of Virginians earning their GED certificates annually. **This equates to approximately \$380 spent for each GED passer above the 10,000 passers per year when the Race began.** And statistics show that a person who holds a GED credential or high school diploma earns an average of \$7,000 more per year than one who does not.* That is a rare return on investment and one that adult educators in Virginia can be proud of.

Strengthening Virginia's work force is something we can all be excited about.

*United States Department of Labor, 2002

"The Race to GED has made us a player at the table with other WIA partners and agencies."

Virginia Adult Education Program Manager

The RACE TO GED TIMELINE

2004

FY 2004–2005, \$250,000 is allocated in the state budget to create ten additional pilot sites



By 2005-2006, the Race to GED had gone beyond the pilot stage and was, for the first time, a statewide grant program. In that year, the General Assembly appropriated \$1,935,475 to support Race activities throughout Virginia. A competitive grant program was established by OAEL, and grants ranging from \$10,000 and \$75,000 were awarded to 35 local and regional adult education and literacy programs.

Each year since the program began, substantial annual gains in the number of Virginians earning their GED certificates have been recorded. A comparison of Race to GED grantees and nongrantees¹ in the five years prior to the availability of Race funding reveals that GED output among eventual grantees grew by 2.8 percent annually. Output for nongrantees grew at 2.4 percent – a nominal .4 percent difference. However, during the Race to GED years, grantees averaged an 8 percent annual growth rate, while nongrantees averaged less than a 2 percent annual growth rate.² **Clearly, the funding is improving outcomes.**

In 2005, the Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a Superintendent’s Memorandum that assigned targets for each school division – these were the localities’ shares of the Race to GED target of 20,000 passers per year. During the Race to GED years, 30 percent more grantees met their targets than nongrantees.

The state has now achieved a 50 percent increase in GED attainment since the start of the Race to GED. The grantees and the nongrantees had a similar percentage of annual growth before the Race to GED years, but, in the years since, the difference in GED outcomes between grantees and nongrantees has widened considerably. The Race to GED grant funds have made a significant difference to those programs and a major contribution to Virginia’s GED attainment and the strengthening of Virginia’s work force.

¹The term “grantee” as used in this report, refers to any program receiving Race to GED funding for three of the four years of the statewide competition, 2005-2006 through 2008-2009. A “nongranttee” refers to all other OAEL-funded adult education programs in Virginia.

²These numbers reflect only OAEL-funded adult education programs and do not include the contributions made by state correctional facilities, whose programs are administered by the Department of Correctional Education.

Grantees vs. Nongrantees:

	Pre-Race to GED Years 1999/2000 – 2002/2003	Race to GED Years 2003/2004 – 2008/2009
Race to GED Grantees	2.8%	8.0%
Nongrantees	2.4%	1.9%

From 2003-2009, grantees averaged an 8 percent annual growth rate, while nongrantees averaged less than a 2 percent annual growth rate.



30 percent more grantees met their targets than nongrantees.

Aug/Sept
2004

October
2004

Fall
2004

Virginia Employment Commission includes Race to GED information on unemployment checks

Fast Track I training conducted throughout Virginia

Media partners developed and cultivated

11,042

GED certificates awarded in FY 2003–2004

6.5% increase



Race to GED®

Success Story

RODNEY CAULKINS

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY

Having been a successful business owner for over 15 years, Rodney Caulkins decided to add another achievement to his record and returned to school in order to earn his GED credential.

He passed the GED Tests, but did not stop there. In addition to running Caulkins Construction Company, he now serves on the advisory council for Prince William County Adult Education where his proposal to add a career counseling component for GED completers was adopted. And because he does not want a lack of money to keep other adults from pursuing their education, he has set up a lifetime scholarship fund for those wanting to return to school to gain their GED certificate. Rodney's belief in and enthusiasm for the Race to GED is further evident by his decision to permanently place the Prince William County Public Schools RACE to GED information on the back of his company vans. The Race to GED changed Rodney's life, and now he is helping to change others' lives.

OUTREACH

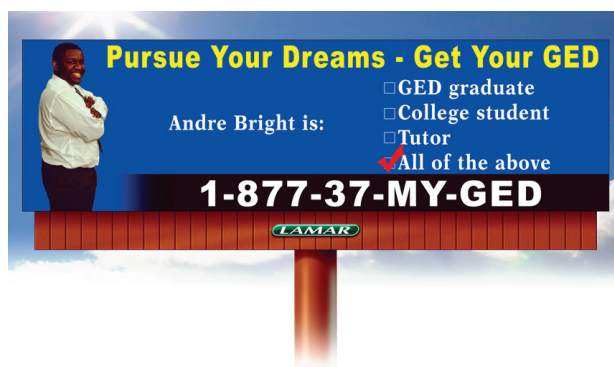
The Race to GED broke new ground by both recognizing the need for effective outreach to recruit those adults who lacked high school credentials into adult education programs, and answering that need with a coordinated, statewide effort. For the first time, targeted outreach efforts were funded at the state level to reach a population unaware of adult education programs and lacking understanding of the value of the GED credential.

OAEL has committed significant efforts and funds since the beginning of the Race to GED to support this priority. A variety of strategic outreach methods has been implemented. These methods include the development of outreach toolkits for local programs, multimedia advertising blitzes, partnering with other state agencies who serve adults in need of basic educational and literacy services, and securing extensive support from private sector partners. All of this work culminated in the creation of an adult education "brand" in Virginia – the Race to GED.

Two distinct phases of outreach have defined the efforts and identified the brand from the state level. Naming Elliott Sadler of NASCAR fame as the 2005 spokesperson for the Race to GED, Phase I utilized the racing image to highlight the theme of the Race to GED. Television commercials, radio spots, billboards, and promotional items depicting Mr. Sadler were placed statewide.

In Phase II, the spotlight shifted to showcase successful GED graduates as role models. These graduates were featured in the Virginia GED Success Stories calendar, television and radio spots, and YouTube, and many of the individuals featured

also made presentations at stakeholder meetings throughout Virginia. The unprecedented and innovative outreach efforts have effectively spread the word about Virginia's GED preparatory programs and changed the way adult education and literacy programs are regarded in the Commonwealth.



The RACE TO GED TIMELINE

2005

FY 2005–2006, \$1,935,475 is appropriated by the General Assembly. Thirty-five local and regional programs are funded through a competitive grant process.

February
2005

Two television commercials featuring Elliott Sadler filmed at Charlotte Motor Speedway

May
2005

NASCAR driver Elliott Sadler is Race spokesperson

May
2005

Race to GED billboards are placed throughout the Richmond area

“Being able to have additional help to carry out the work needed for outreach has resulted in a 20 percent jump in testing for our program.”

Virginia Adult Education Program Manager

Throughout these efforts, OAEL has enjoyed unprecedented support from a wide variety of businesses that recognize the importance of adult education to the improvement of Virginia’s work force. These businesses include Charter Media, Lamar Outdoor Advertising, Comcast, Cox Communications, Food City, Bristol Motor Speedway, and many others. Without this support, the Race to GED would not have enjoyed the success it has.

While OAEL led outreach efforts at the state level, local and regional adult education programs were charged with initiating outreach campaigns at the local level. To prepare the field, trainings and workshops for adult education program managers were delivered by marketing professionals. These focused on marketing strategies, implementation practices, promotional information, and the development of partnerships with other agencies, corporations, and nonprofits.

OAEL also encouraged local and regional programs to collaborate in order to stretch limited resources, and three regional program managers in Southwest Virginia, collectively serving 15 counties and cities, took this suggestion to heart. Linda Allen, Rebecca Scott, and Susan Seymour, working together to solicit support from and cultivate relationships with businesses in their communities, have seen their efforts pay off with millions of dollars worth of free services and marketing. Flocking to give their support, local businesses, made aware of the importance of raising educational levels in their communities and work force, donated everything from public service announcements and outdoor advertising, to branded grocery bags, restaurant coupons, and tickets to stock car races.

Charter Media alone is responsible for almost three million dollars worth of television commercials in that area of Virginia since the start of the program. Allen, Scott, and Seymour all agree that developing this level of community support has been critically important to their success in securing additional Tobacco Fund grants to further their efforts.

As Scott says, “When we walk into a room together, the three of us, we’re sort of hard to ignore.”

Race to GED®

Partner Spotlight

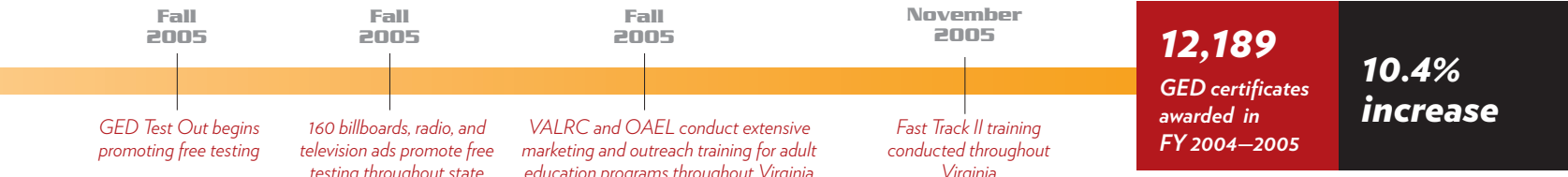
CHARTER MEDIA

Charter Media’s tremendous support for the Race to GED and the field of adult education and literacy is unprecedented in Virginia—totaling over \$3 million worth of public service announcements on cable television since the beginning of the Race. In 2007, to build on the success of the GED Success Story calendar, Charter Media filmed 30-second spots featuring individuals from the calendar. Copies of these spots were included in outreach toolkits provided to local adult education programs, and the spots were seen throughout the state on cable and network television in 2007-2008.

At the local level, Charter Media’s support has been even more pronounced. An early partner with adult education programs in Southwest Virginia, the company has supplied that region with their products, expertise, and time. They have worked closely with those programs to produce public service announcements and supply air time that connect adults with needed programs. Elizabeth Hawa, director of OAEL, said, “Charter Media has been instrumental in improving the quality of life for thousands of Virginia families.”

“Charter Media has felt it a privilege to have been a part of the Race to GED over the past three years . . .”

**Jeff Fritz
Charter Media**





Race to GED®

Success Story

MARÍA NEGRÓN

HENRICO COUNTY

In 1993, María Negrón found herself embarking on a new life as a single mother of three. Lacking a high school diploma, she knew she needed to get an education in order to offer her children a better life. She began inquiring about the process of getting her GED certificate. María had been out of school for ten years, but despite her hesitancy, she took the tests and six weeks later received a letter of congratulations for passing her GED exams. She went on to obtain a bachelor's degree and then a master's degree in education in curriculum and instruction, and today she is a full-time high school Spanish teacher in Chesterfield County. She also works with Richmond Public Schools as an ESOL evening counselor at the Adult Career Development Center in Richmond. With her master's degree, María hopes one day to become an assistant principal.

INSTRUCTION

In order to double the number of Virginians earning GED certificates, OAEL recognized that GED instruction required innovation. Many adults without a high school credential are close to being able to pass the GED Tests, but are discouraged by the time they think is



required to prepare for the tests. However, for those who may have left high school in the tenth or eleventh grade, several years of adult basic education classes are often unnecessary. The Race to GED targets those Virginians in outreach efforts and focuses on providing them appropriate and intensive instruction in what they need to be successful on the tests.

On October 2, 2004, the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) conducted the first training focused on accelerated instruction, Fast Track I, for adult education programs throughout

the Commonwealth. Since that first training, over 700 adult education teachers have participated in Fast Track training. The workshop examined the concept of accelerated learning and introduced three instructional tools: *GED 21st Century*, *GED Connection/Workplace Essential Skills*, and *GED as Project*. Jason Guard of the VALRC states, "These programs offer the gambit of practice, diagnostic assessment, instructional activities, communication skills, and critical thinking development."

Further, guidelines and timelines for Fast Track and GED Prep students were established. Identifying adults who qualify for Fast Track and accelerating the instructional process by targeting their specific needs have proven to be very attractive to adults who are unable or unwilling to commit to perceived lengthy adult basic education classes. By tailoring instructional activities to fit the needs of individual adults, GED instruction in Virginia has indeed been transformed—and the 50 percent increase in GED graduates reflects that.

“Race to GED invigorated our entire instructional program.”

Virginia Adult Education Program Manager

The RACE TO GED TIMELINE

2006

FY 2006—2007 appropriation is continued and 41 local and regional programs are funded through a competitive grant process

January
2006

Due to success, OAEL extends free testing waivers

January
2006

*Governor announces
35,000 more Virginians earn GED credential since the start of the Race*

TESTING

Perhaps it is in the area of GED testing that the most profound changes have occurred.

Three major aspects of GED testing in the Commonwealth of Virginia were transformed because of the Race to GED – the quantity of testing opportunities, the availability of free testing, and the manner in which GED candidates may take the five sections of the GED Tests.

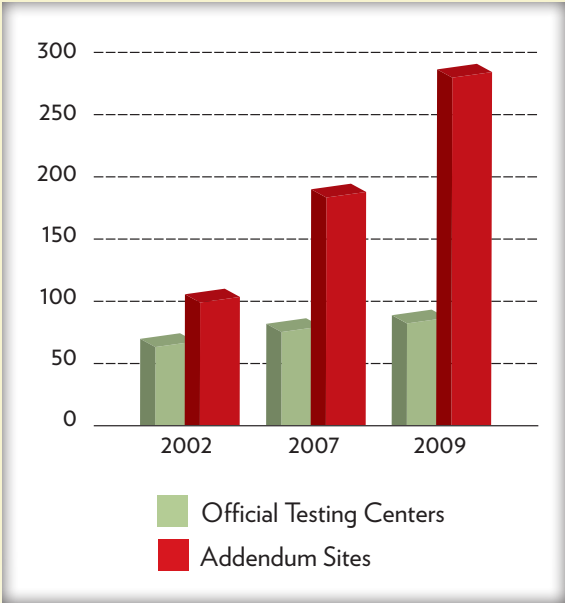
Since the Race to GED began, the number of official testing centers in Virginia has increased by almost 35 percent, while addendum sites have increased by nearly 200 percent. In addition, programs are offering testing opportunities more frequently, with numerous grantees using Race to GED monies to offer testing in remote areas for the first time. For many Virginians struggling with transportation, work, and family issues, having a testing site nearby is essential.

Race to GED monies have also enabled programs, many for the first time, to offer free testing. The Official GED Tests cost individuals \$45, a prohibitively expensive amount for many Virginians, especially the unemployed. Ninety-five percent of grantees report offering free testing to qualifying students—83 percent of those programs report that they fund this through their Race to GED grant dollars. During the first year of the statewide grant, 2005–2006, the state provided reimbursement to local and regional programs for free testing across the Commonwealth for several weeks. That year saw the largest single-year increase in GED attainment in the history of the initiative.

Finally, there is more flexibility in how students may take the tests. In many programs, adult learners have the option to take the tests one at a time, instead of completing the battery of five tests in one day. Teachers are also using “partial testing” as an instructional strategy, building up confidence in the test takers and working intensively on one subject at a time if desired. One program manager stated it this way: “A key thing that has come out of all of this is being able to take one test at a time, which has just increased the student success rate so tremendously.”

Additionally, testing on demand is now available in many programs—96 percent of which did not offer this service before the Race to GED. Perhaps most significant is that 67 percent of all grantees state that the most significant activities that the Race to GED has allowed their program to initiate are in the realm of testing.

Testing Opportunities



	2002	2007	2009
Official Testing Centers	62	78	84
Addendum Sites	100	190	292

“If there was one thing that I would say revolutionized our program, it’s our ability to do testing on demand, one test at a time.”

Virginia Adult Education Program Manager

Summer 2006

Outreach efforts shift to success story theme

October 2006

15-month Success Story calendar developed

13,549

GED certificates awarded in FY 2005–2006

11.5% increase



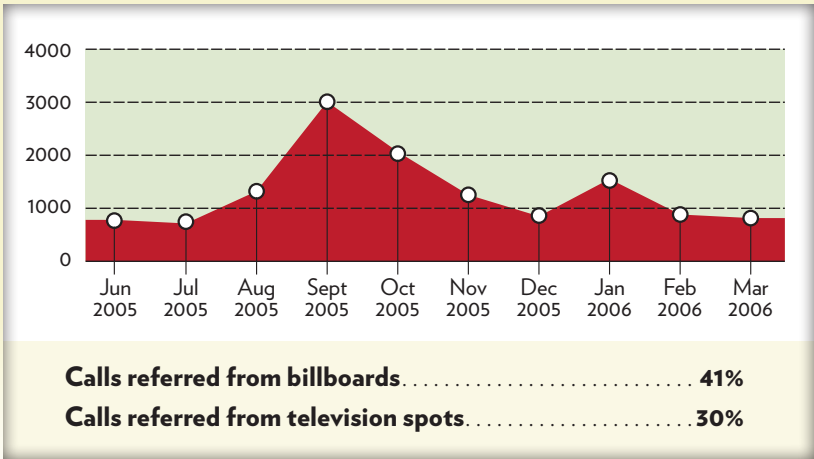
**11.5 percent increase
in GED passers from
previous year**

Highlight Year — 2005-2006

2005-2006 was a milestone year for the Race to GED. This was the first year in which Race to GED funds were specifically identified in a line item of the General Assembly’s budget. \$1,935,475 was appropriated from the Commonwealth’s general funds to support the local and regional adult education programs, which received the money through a competitive grant process.

In January 2005, the Secretary of Commerce and Trade submitted a proposal for funding to the Literary Foundation of Virginia to support the Race to GED initiative in Virginia’s Tobacco Region. The proposal was approved, and the grant from the Foundation in the amount of \$106,000 purchased 160 billboards in targeted areas throughout Virginia. The signs featured the message, “Want to Make More Money? Call About a Free GED Test,” and included the toll-free GED Helpline phone number. Doubling the impact, Lamar Outdoor Advertising matched the dollar amount spent by offering additional boards to supplement those funded by the Literary Foundation grant. The billboards were used to support a statewide effort that took place in the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006 – the GED Test Out.

Helpline Calls



The **RACE TO GED TIMELINE**

2007

FY 2007–2008 appropriation is continued and 41 local and regional programs are funded through a competitive grant process



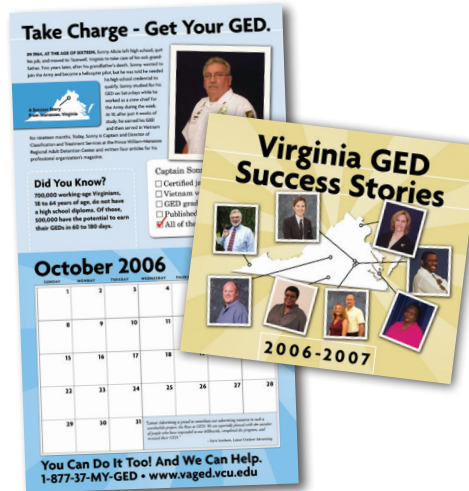
A major effort undertaken by OAEL as part of the Race to GED, the GED Test Out included free GED testing, state funds directed to testing centers to increase and expand testing opportunities, and a coordinated statewide recruitment effort.

During this initiative, the GED Tests were offered for the first time in remote, rural locations in Nottoway, Amelia, Greene, Fluvanna, Nelson, Rappahannock, and Madison Counties, among others. Adult educators collaborated with local Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) offices to send letters and brochures with information about the GED Test Out and local adult education opportunities to VEC clients who had not completed high school. An arrangement with the state VEC office resulted in printed messages on hundreds of thousands of unemployment checks over the course of the year encouraging people without a GED to call the Helpline number. Feedback and data for the Test Out were so positive that OAEL extended the reimbursement period for the fee waiver through the end of March 2006.

Coordinating with that effort, VALRC contracted with Clear Channel, Comcast, and Charter Media to place radio and television spots concentrating on the 20-40 year-old demographic. Each of the media companies agreed to support the paid spots with additional public service announcements. Because of this support, the VALRC realized a three-to-one return on this radio and television investment. The result was overwhelming.

Calls to the GED Helpline spiked in response to the advertising campaign, jumping 322 percent from July 2005 (702 calls) to the peak in September 2005 (2,961 calls). Helpline data showed that the billboards referred 41 percent and television spots 30 percent of all calls. The outcomes were also encouraging. Fiscal year 2005-2006 showed an 11.5 percent increase in GED passers from the previous year, and the largest increase during the Race to GED years or the ten years prior to the program,* which had remained flat for a decade. Free testing, support from the Governor's office, and a coordinated state-level recruitment effort made possible through the support of partners resulted in 2005-2006 being a highlight of the Race to GED initiative.

**With the exception of 2001, which reflected higher numbers due to the build-up to the test change in 2002.*



Race to GED®

Work Force Spotlight

THE SHAW GROUP

In 2008, after The Shaw Group began building Dominion Virginia Power's hybrid power plant in St. Paul, the company approached Rebecca Scott, program manager of the Regional Adult Education Program of Lee, Scott, Wise, and Norton, to form a partnership to improve the education and work skills of their employees. Already invested in training employees through The National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) and the Department of Labor's apprenticeship training program, the company wished to formally evaluate and educate its workers. By third quarter 2009-2010, 25 employees have passed at least a portion of the GED Tests, 432 employees have been assessed for reading and math ability, 88 have been enrolled in active adult education classes on and off-site, and 126 Shaw participants have enrolled in apprenticeship training on-site, completed a Shaw credential, or advanced into occupational or postsecondary training.

"Shaw's craft development programs allow prospective employees in our communities to benefit from a nationally recognized curriculum and continued career opportunities and Regional Adult Education's effort ensures our employees have the tools they need to be successful."

Carla Thompson,
training coordinator at
Shaw's project in St. Paul

Fall
2007

Race Outreach Activities and
Materials page developed on
DOE Web site

October
2007

Governor announces
GED OnDemand

14,280
GED certificates
awarded in
FY 2006–2007

**5.4%
increase**



Race to GED®

Success Story

CLARENCE LUMPKIN, JR.

RUSSELL COUNTY

"It got real. Every job application I filled out asked about my educational background. I needed to have something to put in that blank."

In 2001, when Clarence Lumpkin, Jr. left school after the eleventh grade, he believed the money earned working full-time would be more valuable than finishing high school. When he married and had a child several years later, he realized that those wages were not enough. He applied for many jobs and often did not even receive a response. Encouraged by his wife to earn his GED certificate, he returned to school in the winter of 2009 and received the credential by studying for and taking one test at a time. Upon his completion of the GED program, Clarence was awarded a Virginia GED Bridge Scholarship provided by the Alcoa Foundation through Southwest Regional Adult Education. Consequently, Clarence enrolled in the Construction Academy at Southwest Virginia Community College and is pursuing an associate's degree in carpentry and masonry. He is employed with Shaw Construction.

LOCAL INNOVATION

While OAEL worked to set the stage for and promote the Race to GED, local and regional programs were charged with developing successful channels of outreach and service delivery tailored to their regions.

And though the Race's priorities stress outreach, instruction, and testing, OAEL provides wide-ranging guidance and technical support to local programs as they confront their own particular local demands and use the Race to GED funding to stretch their adult education programs in new ways. This has often resulted in innovations that have changed the face of adult education in Virginia.

Hampton City Public Schools responded to the goal of strengthening their work force by recognizing that a program could spend money on outreach, have an innovative instructional model, tailor their testing to meet the needs of their students, and still have a problem with retention. Adults attempting to improve their education and work force skills face countless barriers; consequently, the problem of learner persistence is a constant in adult education.

Hampton created the Tracker system to combat the issue. Developed within the school system's K-12 Technology Department, the Tracker allows the program to pinpoint their clients' needs, counsel appropriately, and, most importantly, to follow-up with students all along their educational path. Using this new strategy, the Hampton program met their goal of doubling the number of GED graduates from their program, from 179 to 360, in a single year.

Several other programs throughout Virginia, notably Southwest Virginia Regional and New River Community College programs, have had success with tracker systems, which have improved their areas' persistence rates.

In Central Virginia, Chesterfield County responded to recruitment challenges in a different way. To battle the number of adults in her community without a high school credential, Debbie Hinton, Chesterfield County's adult education program manager, decided to focus on the 18-25 year olds in her community. With the help of Madison+Main, an advertising and public relations firm, and at greatly reduced costs, Virtual Ted was created. Appearing in radio spots geared towards the chosen demographic, "Ted," young, hip, and speaking their language, prompted listeners to take the GED Tests for free. Listeners could also interact with Ted through text messages. "When they started calling for Ted, we knew we had reached our audience," Hinton says. "Within the month, registration for the GED exam had increased 400 percent."

The RACE TO GED TIMELINE

2008

FY 2008–2009 appropriation is continued and 40 local and regional programs are funded through a competitive grant process

March
2008

*Additional addendum
testing sites added*

Summer
2008

*Virginia Workforce Council's One Stop
committee chooses GED awareness as
annual priority*

The Race to GED grant funds allow programs to creatively address the barriers faced in their own areas—and to produce results in reaching and retaining adult students who ultimately invigorate Virginia’s work force.

PLUGGEDINVA Pilot

At the other end of the state in Russell County, a team led by Virginia’s Secretary of Technology kicked off the **PLUGGEDINVA** program in March 2009. This innovative



approach to adult education and transition to post-secondary education meets the work force and community needs of an increasingly technology-driven 21st century.

An intensive, six-month program, the **PLUGGEDINVA** curriculum addresses the need to prepare for and pass the GED Tests while simultaneously equipping students with the 21st century skills they need to find entry-level employment in the growing technology sector. The outreach efforts and the intake requirements for **PLUGGEDINVA** were based on Race to GED’s Fast Track model. As with the broader Race recruitment, **PLUGGEDINVA** outreach was largely made possible by the partnerships forged early with supportive area businesses.

The innovation of this project lies in the contextualized curriculum with built-in outcomes beyond the GED, which is one of only several targeted achievements. In addition to the GED certificate, graduates earn Career Readiness Certificates, various Microsoft certifications, up to 24 credit hours at the local community college, and training in professional soft skills, digital literacy skills, and essential 21st century skills.



Understanding that earning the GED credential alone is often insufficient to earn a living wage, and responding to the needs of an increasingly technology-driven economy, **PLUGGEDINVA**’s innovative approach recognizes both the needs of employers and the work force.

PLUGGEDINVA works well with the local Workforce Investment Board’s mission. Linda Allen, regional program manager for the Southwest Regional Adult Education Program, stated, “It is a great model for collaboration with education, business, and community colleges because we all have a very defined role, which is essential. We’ve never worked together at this level before.” This model has gained national attention, and it is being replicated throughout Southwest Virginia, as well as in Kentucky.

Race to GED®

Work Force Spotlight

**WEST PIEDMONT
WORKFORCE
INVESTMENT BOARD**

In 2005, the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board (WIB), working with Stacey Wright, program manager for Region 12 Adult Education, funded a Race to GED pilot in the City of Danville. This pilot helped shape the future success of the Race to GED statewide. The West Piedmont WIB’s support of the Race to GED spurred a partnership with the Martinsville City/ Henry County Chamber of Commerce. This initiative, called Business IQ, focused on placing GED classes in local businesses. Twenty-nine businesses responded to the call that year and, so far, 226 GED credentials have been issued through the program. The Race to GED, with the support of the West Piedmont WIB and Region 12 Adult Education Program, became the platform for partnerships between business and adult education programs throughout the state in the creation of a more robust work force.

“Because of their vision and monumental financial support, the West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board was instrumental in getting the Race to GED out of the pits and onto the start line. Without the Board’s support and efforts to raise the educational levels of our region, the race would never have begun.”

Stacey Wright

September
2008

*Race to GED logo/ Helpline number
featured in Governor’s YouTube video*

October
2008

*MY GED Success
Story video contest
announced*

October
2008

*Governor recognizes
GED Awareness Week
with a proclamation*

15,707

**GED certificates
awarded in
FY 2007–2008**

**9.9%
increase**



Race to GED®

Success Story

LEE EDMONDSON

MIDDLE PENINSULA

For years afterwards, Lee Edmondson regretted leaving high school in her junior year. Raising her daughters alone on minimum wage jobs, Lee made up her mind to change all of their lives. After seeing advertising for GED testing, she called the number, enrolled in a class and subsequently earned her GED credential. Armed with confidence and encouragement, Lee enrolled in her local community college, received her associate degree in law enforcement, and began working as an investigator for the Department of Corrections. Since that time, she has worked as an investigator for Virginia Power, a police officer for Newport News, and an investigator for the Inspector General of Corrections. Today, she is an investigator for a local insurance company. Lee says that she mostly values the additional time she had with her family as they grew and the example she has been able to set for them as a result of obtaining her GED credential.

CONCLUSION

The Race to GED initiative changed how adult education is delivered in Virginia. It raised the level of professionalism, refined goals, and highlighted adult education and literacy's contributions to the work force development priorities of Virginia. It also made adult education much more visible to other agencies and to the public.

Research-based professional development opportunities are equipping adult educators with the tools to effectively reach out to adults in need, tailor client-centered instruction, and increase the opportunities and effectiveness of GED testing. OAEL supports and lends direction to these efforts not only with grant funding for local and regional programs, but also by conducting a variety of activities to continually build on the Race to GED's success. These activities include ongoing outreach to and partnering with other work force agencies, development of a certification program for teachers and administrators, continued professional development opportunities through VALRC and Radford's Office of Adult Education and Literacy Projects, and targeted funding of specialists throughout the state to support adult education priorities and transitions.

Innovations at the local level have been developed in response to the goal to strengthen Virginia's work force by doubling the number of GED certificates awarded. These innovations would not have been possible without the support that the Race to GED grants provide to local adult education programs. The Race to GED redefined adult education practices in Virginia, and this forward-thinking initiative has laid the groundwork for creativity and innovation throughout the state.

Partnerships have been developed within Virginia's work force development system that continue to drive the success of the Race to GED. OAEL's recent work with the Virginia Workforce Council has resulted in statewide GED Weeks in 2008 and 2009, which provided for an array of local activities focused on expanding access to GED preparation and testing. Another is planned for 2010 with an emphasis on transitioning adult learners to postsecondary and job training programs. The Governor's Task Force on Career Pathways – an interagency team charged with developing a career pathways system for Virginia – identified improving transitions for adult learners into postsecondary education and work force training as a key action step.

The result of all of this work is a goal-oriented, client-centered adult education system that has raised the number of GED graduates in Virginia by 50 percent since 2005. It is a system that is critical to the success of Virginia's work force.

The RACE TO GED TIMELINE

2009

FY 2009–2010 appropriation is continued and 42 local and regional programs are funded through a competitive grant process

**February
2009**

*First Plugged In
pilot class begins*

**March
2009**

*Secretary of Technology and
Virginia Senator kickoff
Plugged In project*

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Race to GED continues and in the coming years OAEL will work toward the continued expansion of successful practices that have grown out of the first few years of the initiative. A second focus is on the development of innovative programs and partnerships that build upon what has been achieved.

The 1.9 million dollars that the General Assembly allocates annually for the Race to GED is distributed in its entirety to adult education programs throughout Virginia using a competitive grant process. However, a 2009 survey of Race grantees revealed that state-level support of outreach and marketing activities was key to local successes. Consequently, OAEL will continue to pursue resources and partnerships to fund activities such as the statewide marketing blitz, free testing waivers, and the GED Success Story Calendars – the type of activities that made 2005-2006 the most successful year of the initiative, with an 11.5 percent increase in GED passers. Recent examples of such efforts include partnerships with the Virginia Workforce Council's Workforce Services Committee over the past two years that resulted in statewide GED and Lifelong Learning Awareness weeks, during which local programs and other WIB partners held job fairs, test blitzes, and a variety of other activities to raise awareness about adult education and work force services.

The GED by itself, however, is simply not enough to open the door to a family-sustaining wage. By 2016, 40 percent of all new jobs will require some postsecondary education or training, while thirty of the fastest growing fields will require a minimum of a bachelor's degree.¹ To respond to that need, the Race to GED will continue to support programs like **PLUGGEDINVA**. Intensive, contextualized curricula, that offer opportunities for dual-enrollment with local community colleges, are showing great success in Virginia and throughout the United States. Plans are underway to expand the **PLUGGEDINVA** approach to programs across the Commonwealth, and the Race to GED funding will be a key part of that expansion.

Finally, no single state agency or organization can independently build the kind of skilled, educated, and credentialed work force that will be key to a thriving Virginia economy in the 21st century. OAEL is working closely with other work force development partners from the public and private sectors to increase the number of successful transitions from adult education programs to postsecondary study and job training. As these partners build and implement a robust career pathways system that offers seamless service delivery for Virginians who are seeking ever-higher levels of training and education, the Race to GED will support a wide range of efforts to prepare undereducated citizens not only to pass the GED Tests, but also to succeed in their future careers.

¹<http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/cps2008/Table1-01.xls> and <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t06.htm>



“The Race to GED has enabled us to transition students from adult education to postsecondary education and training more quickly.”

Virginia Adult Education Program Manager

July
2009

First Plugged In class graduates

July
2009

Governor recognizes GED and Lifelong Learning Awareness Week with a proclamation

15,495
GED certificates
awarded in
FY 2008–2009

Since FY 2002-2003 there has been an increase of
50% of GED passers
over the pre-Race to GED years.



For more information about the Race to GED,
call **804-225-2053** or visit **www.gedva.com**



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